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QUESTIONS OF THE DAY. No. XII.

STORAGE  
AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
IN THE  
PORT OF NEW YORK

AN INVESTIGATION INTO METHODS OF HANDLING MERCHANDISE,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO QUESTIONS OF  
COST AND CONVENIENCE

BY

WILLIAM NELSON BLACK

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1884

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## STORAGE AND TRANSPORTATION IN THE PORT OF NEW YORK.

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### *Our Commercial Progress.*

In the study of questions having an economical bearing men are not, ordinarily, gifted with a very extended vision into the future. Whether the injunction to take no thought of the morrow would be wise or unwise when applied to such subjects, it is generally observed. But in the preparation of an economic thesis we can only know what will be expedient by anticipating events.

The first question that may properly be considered in the treatment of the subject to be discussed, refers to the growth of commerce in the Port of New York, and its demands in the way of increased accommodations. But when a writer undertakes to forecast truly the future of material development in this country he will always be thought extravagant unless he displays, prominently, all the available statistics of the past that can be gathered from published reports. Before making any prediction, then, it will be well to call attention to the following tables of exports and imports, compiled in the office of the *Journal of Commerce*. They cover, it will be seen, a period of thirty

years, and come down to a sufficiently recent date for the purpose held in view in their republication.

FOREIGN IMPORTS AT NEW YORK.

Year.	MERCANDISE.		Specie and Bullion.	Total Imports.
	Dutiable.	Free.		
1851	\$119,592,254	\$9,719,771	\$2,049,543	\$131,361,578
1852	115,336,052	12,105,342	2,408,225	129,849,619
1853	179,512,182	12,156,387	2,429,083	194,097,652
1854	163,494,984	15,768,916	2,107,572	181,371,472
1855	142,900,661	14,103,946	855,631	157,860,238
1856	193,839,646	17,902,578	1,814,425	213,556,649
1857	196,279,362	21,440,734	12,898,033	230,618,129
1858	128,578,256	22,024,691	2,264,120	152,867,067
1859	213,640,363	28,708,732	2,816,421	245,165,516
1860	201,401,683	28,006,447	8,852,330	238,260,460
1861	95,326,459	30,353,918	37,088,413	162,768,790
1862	149,970,415	23,291,625	1,390,277	174,652,317
1863	174,521,766	11,567,000	1,525,811	187,614,577
1864	204,128,236	11,731,902	2,265,622	218,125,760
1865	212,208,301	10,410,837	2,123,281	224,742,419
1866	284,033,567	13,001,588	9,578,029	306,613,184
1867	238,297,955	11,044,181	3,306,339	252,648,475
1868	232,344,418	11,764,027	7,085,389	251,193,834
1869	275,779,976	14,789,235	15,788,462	306,357,673
1870	289,618,878	13,716,500	11,864,644	315,200,022
1871	349,635,398	28,878,294	6,348,608	384,862,300
1872	369,083,458	57,429,020	5,594,208	432,106,686
1873	293,035,348	86,924,877	18,605,611	398,565,836
1874	278,677,532	108,598,631	6,407,571	393,683,734
1875	235,398,509	91,791,853	13,438,557	340,628,919
1876	202,486,773	76,659,977	26,217,888	305,364,638
1877	221,401,649	92,686,992	15,000,227	339,088,868
1878	201,540,213	82,495,681	19,150,973	303,186,867
1879	234,775,206	105,217,808	84,196,109	424,189,123
1880	337,250,149	126,926,531	75,210,096	539,386,776
1881	310,103,977	129,297,696	56,023,233	495,424,906

## EXPORTS FROM NEW YORK TO FOREIGN PORTS.

Year.	MERCHANTISE.		Specie and Bullion.	Total Exports.
	Domestic.	Foreign.		
1851	\$39,164,775	\$4,745,865	\$43,743,209	\$87,653,849
1852	40,716,781	5,710,573	25,096,255	71,523,609
1853	60,540,888	6,595,754	26,753,356	93,889,998
1854	57,462,422	6,745,259	27,169,406	101,377,087
1855	63,586,775	8,759,787	27,625,740	99,972,302
1856	79,254,195	4,413,335	37,218,766	120,886,296
1857	61,803,235	11,560,920	44,360,174	117,724,329
1858	53,949,703	5,688,509	26,001,431	85,639,643
1859	59,929,531	8,050,790	69,715,866	137,696,187
1860	95,468,296	8,023,984	42,191,171	145,683,451
1861	131,235,995	7,358,906	4,236,250	142,831,151
1862	149,179,591	7,755,231	59,437,021	216,371,843
1863	164,249,177	6,461,791	49,754,066	220,465,034
1864	201,855,989	19,966,553	50,825,621	272,648,163
1865	174,247,454	4,379,145	30,003,683	208,630,282
1866	186,655,969	5,673,585	62,553,700	254,883,254
1867	178,210,409	8,579,616	51,801,948	238,591,973
1868	156,075,578	7,990,524	70,841,599	234,907,701
1869	187,812,776	7,413,930	32,108,448	227,335,154
1870	185,740,061	10,205,672	58,191,475	254,137,208
1871	225,553,247	9,112,990	63,865,546	298,531,783
1872	225,475,687	11,383,610	71,959,042	308,818,339
1873	288,707,357	11,538,048	48,659,661	348,905,066
1874	274,201,898	9,738,235	61,222,228	345,162,361
1875	247,681,724	8,780,444	67,556,650	324,018,818
1876	265,774,302	9,776,662	43,097,102	318,648,066
1877	290,960,048	9,973,923	27,497,169	326,431,140
1878	340,206,868	9,207,432	13,107,788	362,522,082
1879	349,471,680	6,746,885	14,828,044	371,046,609
1880	406,955,884	8,866,943	9,370,272	425,193,099
1881	358,479,834	14,656,536	12,623,831	385,760,201

An examination of these tables will show that the commerce of the port does not increase at any thing

like a uniform annual ratio. It moves by a series of leaps and bounds ; sometimes, for one or two years, showing even a very startling decline, and then springing upward to a point far in excess of all past reports. Our civil war, and two or three partial or complete panics within the period illustrated by these tables, will account for this eccentric growth in the columns of figures ; but at the end of thirty years it will be seen that the total of both exports and imports for the year 1851 can be multiplied by three without nearly reaching the total of 1881. The total of exports, indeed, can be multiplied by four. This shows that for long intervals of time the foreign commerce of the port doubles within periods averaging not more than fifteen years. Want of data prevents an equally accurate estimate upon the domestic commerce of the port, of the commerce, *i. e.*, which passes merchandise through the city, and calls for the service of our local agencies in transportation and storage ; but judging from the known enormous development of our manufacturing industries, and the growth of our coastwise commerce, we have the right to conclude that it is even surpassing our foreign trade in the rapidity of its advance. The traffic at New York is increasing almost beyond conception. Even without reference to reports, this is manifest in the increasing throng or, rather, blockade of vehicles in the streets, in the growth of warehouses and other water-front improvements in South Brooklyn, and in the forest of

masts that extend southward almost to Bay Ridge. Evidently, there is one field of enterprise where there is little danger of over-production. We can safely put money in improvements which will provide for the economical handling of merchandise. It is a plain duty, indeed, to prepare in time for the enormous increase which every period of twelve or fifteen years is certain to bring to the traffic concentrated in the harbor of New York. Within the next twenty years we may more than double the number of storage warehouses that now serve as receptacles for merchandise in process of transportation from the place of its production to its place of delivery, and find a profit in the investment. This may sound like a rash saying to those who know how recently certain water-front improvements in Brooklyn have been made to pay an interest on the capital involved; but the delay in these instances was due, solely, to the difficulty of diverting the current of commerce into new and unaccustomed channels. With warehousing, as with every other field of adventure in trade, the new-comer is placed at a disadvantage as against his established competitor; and no matter how great his superiority in location and equipment, he must abide the time when customers can be won to his support. As a matter of fact, the accommodations for traffic have never begun to keep pace with the demand. There has been a great deal of misdirected effort. It will be seen in the sequel that more than three fourths of the capital

expended in the construction of warehouses, and in providing means for handling merchandise, has been misplaced. But for practical, sensible, comprehensive plans in providing for the necessities of a great commercial entrepôt there is plenty of work at hand, and only a beginning has been made. This beginning, too, unfortunately, is found outside of the municipal boundaries of New York City. Were a traveller from Europe, uninstructed in our local lore, and gifted with only a Frenchman's accomplishment in geography, asked, when off Governor's Island, to point out the situation of the leading commercial city on the continent, he would certainly look along the line of waterfront warehouses in Brooklyn, and declare it to be the location of New York. At no other point, when looking from the water, could he see any indication of the neighborhood of a great commercial centre.

### *The Harbor.*

Conceding, then, on the testimony of the past, that the total amount of the present commerce of this port will represent less than one third its total at the end of the next twenty-eight or thirty years, it will be in order to take a glance at our harbor, and see to which points the commercial movement is likely to extend, and the limitations of our resources for docking ships, moving railway trains, and handling merchandise. Fortunately, we are not confined in any pent-up Utica. It will be proper to consider in this study not the city of

New York alone, but the entire system of rivers, bays, and channels which may be made easily accessible to ships that have entered the harbor either by the way of Sandy Hook or Long Island Sound,—a system that extends all the way from the Harlem River, and beyond, to the Raritan River, in New Jersey. The district washed by these waters, in its relation to the water-ways and railways that converge to this point, may be regarded as a terminal unit ; and its resources seem almost illimitable. Within a radius of eighteen miles, say from the site of the proposed statue of Liberty, on Bedloe's Island, there are more than one hundred and fifty miles of water front. Such a prolonged system of shore lines, concentrated in a like limited area and suitable in location for terminal improvements, is not to be found anywhere else on the globe. This is due to insular divisions ; and on account of the expansive surface of river and bay by which the different islands that hold our population are surrounded, the extent of possible pier line is almost beyond calculation. Without a great flight of the imagination it can be estimated among the thousands of miles. We certainly possess a harbor of wonderful possibilities. It is equal to the demands of the commerce of all the great capitals of the world combined ; and it cannot fail of concentrating in this neighborhood an incomparably larger population than ever yet found a lodgement in any other place. Even across the Hudson River, in New Jersey, there is a skeleton city

more than twenty-five miles in length which will one day surpass the present population of London, and maintain a close rivalry with the great cities which, connecting with New York, will cover all the western end of Long Island and the entire extent of Staten Island. This is the destiny which the great magnitude of our harbor and its commanding position on the coast will almost impose upon a not very remote posterity.

But it will not now be worth while to indulge too freely in the American propensity for kite-flying. We shall prepare better conditions for our future growth if we devote the passing years to a study of prevailing defects, and the work of providing remedies and improvements. Every thing is not quite so fair as it seems upon the surface. It is the map furnished us by the Coast Survey, and not the geography of the common schools, that teaches the limitation of our present resources. Our one hundred and fifty miles of shore line are not all available. New Jersey, without heavy expenditures of money, has very little serviceable water front. Over an expanse of about eight square miles in New York Bay, beginning at Communipaw and extending southward to Robbin's Reef, a very short sounding-line reaches a bottom composed of mingled sediment and solid rock very difficult of removal. Along the north shore of the Kill von Kull there are two or three miles of water front that may be made available without an expenditure of money beyond the resources of individuals, but New-

ark Bay, it is well known, is only a little better than an unusually depressed salt meadow at flood tide. Equally unserviceable are the Hackensack and Passaic rivers. There is an expansive and deep basin at the lower end of Staten Island Sound, and in the mouth of the Raritan River ; but it is inaccessible at low tide to the heavier class of ships on account of the bar at the upper end of Raritan Bay. Only along the west bank of the Hudson River, from Weehawken to Communipaw, a distance of little more than five miles, can New Jersey be said to have any available water-front ready for the service of first-class shipping, and, even along this line, reports from General Newton's department do not indicate that nature has been excessively kind to our neighboring State. This is a subject for regret as well in New York as in New Jersey. We have not yet learned to comprehend the Jersey philosophy, which teaches that if you wish to increase your goods, and advance your material well-being, you must cripple your customers, and keep them reduced to the lowest possible total in numbers. We hold that among the cluster of cities surrounding New York harbor progress is universal ; promoted in certain localities by favorable conditions, it is true, but tending always to reciprocal benefits. We draw upon the entire continent and the world for our increase of population and wealth ; and the growth of any one district bordering upon the harbor stimulates the growth of all other districts in a ratio proportioned to

its own advance. This is the true philosophy, and we may hold it to be a subject for regret that the available water front in New Jersey is so restricted; without surrendering any of our natural and human desire for self-aggrandizement. We should multiply only the more rapidly were New Jersey even able to rival our own progress. But we are dealing with facts, and we find that, during many years to come, the resources of the harbor must be estimated without much reference to its Jersey shore. Even the five miles of water-front along the Hudson River have been nearly all appropriated by the great railroads for depots and freight yards; and private warehouses, always the representatives of commercial enterprise, are nowhere visible.

But without the co-operation of New Jersey there is still no lack of room. The available water front within reach of private enterprise, where not monopolized by the city of New York and made subject to an administration which, as we shall see further on, has worked disastrously for our best interests, is still very extensive. It comprises, in addition to the river front in New York, the shore of Long Island from Flushing Bay to Fort Hamilton on the Narrows, and the north and northeast shore of Staten Island. Below Fort Hamilton, on the Lower Bay, and along the south shore of Staten Island, the force that has crippled New Jersey has been at work, and the water front cannot be so cheaply utilized; but along the Kill von Kull and

New York Bay to Clifton, and between Fort Hamilton and Gowanus Bay, there is a combined water front, with deep navigable water, about eleven miles in extent, almost entirely unimproved. Adding to this the unimproved water front north of Hunter's Point, on Long Island, and the waste places north of the improved section in New York City, and we still find more than twenty-five miles of shore line awaiting the hand of fresh enterprise—a line fully equal in extent to all the improved sections of the harbor combined. This should be sufficient to relieve us from something of the sense of suffocation with which we are now compelled to contemplate our commercial operations along the Hudson River piers. It should be sufficient, also, to induce reflection on the causes that have led to such an inconvenient crowding of this particular section of our harbor.

### *Want of System in Terminal Arrangement.*

When we consider the great extent of our water front, and its capabilities, we cannot help but wonder at the many incongruous spectacles that must be witnessed in moving through the streets of New York, and along the shores of the two rivers that form its boundaries to the east and west. Along something more than one mile of the Hudson River water front we discover the most intense activity. West Street and its lateral thoroughfares are at times almost impassable; an avalanche of trucks, market wagons, etc., having descended from every part of the city, and ren-

dered all movement, except under the protection of some burly policeman, an act requiring considerable nerve and address. Along other sections of the water front, equally accessible to ships and vehicles, there is an appearance of something very nearly approaching stagnation. Who, in these modern times, ever hears of a blockade on South Street, except, possibly, in the vicinity of Fulton Market? Even the ships that lie at the piers along that thoroughfare usually show such an extraordinary depth of freeboard that one cannot help suspecting that, having discharging their cargoes elsewhere, they have been pulled into this quiet commercial eddy to await orders. Such, indeed, is very commonly the situation. Ships driven away from the piers in Brooklyn, to make way for new arrivals, tie up at the East River piers, and may often lie there an indefinite length of time without molestation. Yet the distance of those piers from piers that rent at \$40,000 and \$70,000 per year, on the North River, is less than one mile, and it is idle to say that they are not just as accessible and secure. But they only furnish excellent berths for fleets of canal-boats lying away in winter quarters; and for all the purposes of active commerce, they are becoming almost supernumerary.

At first thought it would seem that this incongruity must result from some mismanagement on the part of the Dock Department. Without observing the number of unoccupied or half-occupied piers men clamor for new piers, denounce the New York and

Brooklyn Bridge and the sectional docks as obstacles in the way of commerce, and declare that the Dock Commissioners are inattentive or incompetent. Undoubtedly, the grant of the right of eminent domain to the municipal government by our too liberal ancestors was a blunder; and certain hardships have been entailed, in consequence, which threaten to pursue our posterity to the latest generation. Notwithstanding the amount of dock property which has been alienated from the city our municipal government still remains a monopolist of water-front franchises. Enterprise is not free along our rivers; and commerce, less than any other pursuit among men, will bear shackling and handcuffs. But it would be unjust to charge the evils that afflict the traffic of the port to any particular administration. Unfortunately these evils are too vital and serious to have so light an origin as mere administrative mismanagement. The best possible administration could not avert the evils that have followed upon a mischievous exercise of misplaced power. The right of eminent domain in the hands of the city has thrown an incubus upon private enterprise along the water front. This was inevitable from the beginning. The city, unlike the State, is a corporation; and it became a monopolist the moment it became a proprietor. This was the first misfortune, and the crowning catastrophe followed. Why should not New York do what it would with its own? If it owned the water front why

not wed beauty to utility, and locate streets overlooking the rivers all around the city? The proposition would have been fought bitterly, and pronounced confiscation by the courts, had the lands taken for these improvements been the property of individuals. But no such obstacle interposed, and our delectable river streets were secured. They have proved to be neither ornamental nor useful. Filthy, dilapidated, and wretched thoroughfares, they have failed at all points where the pressure of traffic has been severe in keeping open a vista of blue waters; and they have girdled the city like a band of iron around a young oak. It was these streets which first divorced the wholesale warehouses from the piers, and compelled the use of trucks in handling all merchandise whether intended for local consumption or for temporary storage. The process was simple and natural enough. Merchandise once loaded into trucks could be hauled to any point, at some sacrifice in cost, it is true, if not delivered in the immediate neighborhood, but without entailing an altogether needless expense. The sequel to this discovery was inevitable. It offered a sufficient motive to the merchants for locating their warehouses where, in default of a better reason, they thought the air most salubrious. They have scattered them throughout the city, and the enormous waste that follows will be shown hereafter.

But the crowded condition of North River piers,

and the comparative desertion of other piers, is due to the same cause. The removal of merchandise from the water front to warehouses in trucks is not the end of the labor. It is only the first act in the comedy of terminal transportation which is being perpetually played in New York, and played, it is to be feared, to an audience not yet sufficiently alive to the humor of the performance. The merchandise removed from the water front with so much labor and care must all be returned again, if not sent to a depot by an equally laborious process, when the time comes for its despatch to some new point of delivery. But the inevitable truck is at hand, ready for the transfer of goods to any section of the city, and it is the most natural thing in the world to see the piers, controlled and used by the great transportation companies, made the almost universal point of shipment. This is the secret of crowds and high rents on the North River, low rents elsewhere, and the truck bedlam on West Street. Were the wholesale warehouses all located on the water front, and the adjacent block of each lateral street, and connected by tramways extending along both rivers, we should see rents reduced to an equilibrium all the way from Corlears Hook to the most northern pier on the Hudson River.

#### *Counting the Cost.*

But crowded streets and districts, annually becoming worse and worse, are not the only nor the greatest

evil that follows upon our disconnected system of wharves and warehouses. There is a question of cost, when the subject is examined under the light of the most accurate figures that can be obtained, which goes far to explain why New York, with all its advantages, is the most expensive terminal point in the country. In the old days, before a legal decision had rendered it unnecessary that merchants owning trucks on which they nominally made no charge for service should take out a permit, it would have been easy to learn just what proportion of these vehicles were employed by wholesale houses. A change of system has made the task more difficult. A few shipping merchants own trucks, and on their invoices of goods, sent abroad or into the interior, add a charge for truckage. In these cases permits are taken out, and a license fee is paid ; but the rule is not so common as to render the keeping of a very close record possible. A majority of the merchants who own trucks merely add the cost of their truck service to the prices of their merchandise, and as they are not, therefore, supposed to maintain these vehicles for hire no permit is necessary. Not more than one third of all the trucks in the city are now licensed ; and it is only by calculations founded on the old system that an approximate idea of the present extent of the truck service can be obtained. But by this method we may reach results that will be quite sufficient to point a moral. When the system of permits was universal, the number of trucks in the city had

mounted to 22,000. This was several years ago, during the life of A. T. Stewart, and since then it is known that the numbers have largely increased. A total of 30,000 is now regarded as rather an underestimate at the office of the Mayor's Marshal, where permits are granted. These figures may be accepted as sufficiently accurate; but in estimating the proportion of trucks in the service of wholesale firms we find again the element of uncertainty. Experienced truckmen, however, while not pretending to be strictly correct, estimate the number engaged in such service at one third the total in the city. This would give the number employed by wholesale houses at 10,000. Now, including capital, rents, the board of horses and all costs, the expenses of a double truck, the kind of vehicle most commonly used by wholesale dealers, are \$2,000 per year. Multiply the number of trucks in the service of such dealers by two thousand, then, and we reach a total of \$20,000,000. I dislike very much to publish the amount. I have rubbed my spectacles several times over the number to make sure that there is no visual illusion, and applied all the known rules for proving arithmetic. But twenty million dollars appear to represent the true product; and to this sum must be added the profits of the truckmen who own trucks for hire. The sum of \$25,000,000 per year would probably not be an over-estimate of the grand total. It is an enormous tax on commerce, and, owing to the fact that New York, on account of the magnitude of its

traffic, regulates the price of imported merchandise especially, and largely, also, of domestic merchandise throughout the Union, it lays an appreciable burden on every consumer in the country. It is a rapidly increasing tax, too, according to the testimony of truckmen. Owing to the crowded condition of our streets, it costs twenty-five per cent. more to run a truck now than it cost eight years ago, entailing still another load to be transferred from the truckman to the merchant, and from the merchant to the customer.

Now, what is all this expenditure worth? Were our wholesale warehouses properly located, a few score cars, operated along water-front tramways, at a cost of two or three hundred thousand dollars per year at the utmost, would accomplish the work of all these trucks, and, incidentally, help to render New York a much more agreeable home. There can be no good argument in favor of maintaining this tax. The necessities of truckmen might be urged by those who believe in the economic fallacy of unnecessary labor as a means of giving employment. But a man who can conduct a loaded truck through the streets of New York should have the address to succeed at almost any employment to which he can turn his hand.

#### *Terminal Transportation on the Water.*

Turn, now, from the streets, where we have been compelled to witness folly enthroned on a pile of packing boxes, and take a short excursion over the

mimic sea that forms the harbor of this metropolis. For the purposes in view, it will not be necessary to carry our explorations into any very distant waters. The objects to be investigated are all near at hand. The voyage, after a brief glance at the Harlem River as a point for the early chief seat of metropolitan industry, and for future commercial enterprise when the resources of the more accessible and expansive bay are all exhausted, shall extend only from the grain warehouse of the Central Railroad, and the newly-constructed docks of the West Shore Road, at Weehawken, to the north shore of Staten Island, including, by the way, a trip up the East River to Hunter's Point, and along the shore of South Brooklyn and New Utrecht to the Narrows. Within these boundaries, during many years to come, we may look to see the principal manifestations of our commercial activity ; and it is here that the field should be most carefully studied with a view to the perfection of our machinery. We behold a very inspiriting spectacle. Stately ships, lying idly at the docks or moved by the force of wind, tide or steam, are visible on every hand ; swift ferry-boats ply to and fro, and, to confess truth, now that the harbor, like the streets, is becoming over-crowded at certain points, give to our voyage a trifling spice of danger : apparently exhausted tugs scream, puff, and wallow through the water, and an indescribable flotilla of outlandish-looking craft are tugging at their heels. It is indisputably a very animated scene,

and something to make the blood of all native or adopted New Yorkers tingle with a sense of pride and satisfaction. But I am not now in search of the picturesque, and have no eye for poetry. It is a question of cost and unrequited labor in terminal transportation that is being investigated; and if we discover that any of those freebooting tugs are making us pay too dearly for their whistle, there must be no delay in delivering a broadside that will send them to the bottom, or drive them to more pacific seas. They are numerous enough to make a stubborn fight in their own behalf; but it should prove a losing battle if it can be shown that they, too, like the trucks in the streets, are largely a set of needless pensioners on commerce. But this is precisely what I propose to show; and after the facts are furnished there can be very slight grounds for controversy.

Take, for the purpose of illustration, some statistics collected in the offices of two of the trunk-line railroads terminating in Jersey City, but delivering and receiving freight at the piers in New York—the Erie and the Pennsylvania roads. They own a large number of tugs, floats, barges, lighters, etc., and, during seasons of exceptional activity, supplement their own resources by additional boats hired from transportation companies or individuals. The Pennsylvania road owns twenty-two tugs, thirty-eight floats, and forty-six lighters and barges. A portion of this fleet is used in the Raritan Canal traffic. The Erie road owns eight

tugs, nineteen floats, forty-six lighters and barges, one steam lighter, and a large steamer engaged in the transportation of stock. The expense of navigating these fleets is easily estimated, and the sum might be at once given in gross, but the figures in detail are not without interest. It costs \$26 per day to man a tug and supply it with coal. The cost of each tug per year, therefore, of three hundred and thirteen working days, is \$8,138 ; and the combined cost of the thirty tugs owned by the two companies must be put at \$244,140. The floats used for the transportation of loaded cars between the piers are more cheaply manned than the tugs, requiring the service only of the skipper, who, within himself, constitutes the entire crew, not, presumably, very high-priced. But those boats, in the wear and tear of service, are especially subject to injury and in need of frequent repairs, so that an expenditure of \$10 per day for each boat is not thought an excessive estimate of their cost. Combining the floats of the two companies we find a total of fifty-seven in service, at a daily cost of \$570. This produces a total, for the year, of \$147,410. Coming down to lighters and barges we find the number owned by the two companies to be ninety-two. Unlike the floats they must be manned by a sufficient number of men to handle freight, and the sum total for wages on each boat is not less than \$5.50 per day. Repairs, too, should be considered in this case ; but for the purpose in view the mere consideration of wages will be suffi-

cient. Ninety-two lighters and barges, at \$5.50 per day each, cost \$158,378 per year. Now, add together the three totals made by the cost of tugs, floats, and lighters and we reach the sum of \$580,928. At four per cent. this represents the interest on a capital of \$14,500,000, and, approximately, it gives the amount paid annually for conducting the freight harbor service of those two companies in their own bottoms. But no account has been taken of the supplementary service employed, of the capital invested in river craft—more than \$1,500,000,—of the deterioration of the boats—about ten per cent.,—nor of the enormous sacrifice of extensive water-front space made necessary by this method of reaching an objective point. The \$580,928 will not even cover the amount of annual payments. This must be obtained directly from the books of the companies. As a matter of fact the harbor freight transportation of the Erie road alone cost, during the year 1883, an average of \$25,000 per month, or a round \$300,000. Thus it will be seen that were the traffic of the Pennsylvania road no greater than that of its competitor their united expenditures would amount to \$600,000 per year, the interest at four per cent on a capital of \$15,000,000. But is the traffic of the Pennsylvania road no greater than that of its rival? Possibly not in this harbor. In the reports for 1882 the net income of the Pennsylvania road, a large net loss on the New Jersey Division being deducted, is given at \$10,199,804, while the net income of the Erie

road foots up at only \$6,887,680. But a large proportion of the traffic of the Pennsylvania road is derived from Philadelphia and extends no further eastward. Its traffic in the Port of New York, however, is quite certainly equal to that of the Erie road, and no serious error can result from an estimate on that basis.

One suggestive item is found in the report of the Pennsylvania road. Its New Jersey Division is charged with a net loss of \$568,758. This is more than the cost of of its harbor transportation as I have made the estimate ; but were all the costs of this expensive service included, it would be very much less.

### *The Road to Economy.*

Combining the five great roads terminating in Jersey City, and counting all losses, including the waste of water front, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the water freight service costs the interest on \$35,000,000. By those who have not reflected on this subject, and they comprise so large a majority of our citizens that the minority is practically invisible, it will be thought that this expenditure is absolutely necessary in conducting the traffic of the port. The Hudson River interposes its broad surface between the piers in Jersey City and the warehouses in New York and Brooklyn, and the use of boats is unavoidable. This brings us to one of the principal issues in the discussion. In studying the question of economy in terminal transportation, it is necessary to know to just

what extent the use of boats is unavoidable, and wherever the objective point may be reached directly they represent waste to the full extent of the expenditures necessary for their construction, equipment, and navigation.

Let us continue the cruise around the harbor, undertaken at the beginning of the last chapter, but delayed by the obstruction of some shad-pole statistics that were found visible above the surface of the waters. The fact that the location of the metropolitan district is largely insular has been already suggested, and it will now be necessary to call attention to the additional fact, that these insular divisions are the sole origin of that system of river and harbor transportation which aids to make New York such an expensive terminal point. They increase the water-front resources of our harbor immeasurably ; but, at the same time, they interpose the obstacle of deep-water channels on every hand, and apparently compel the use of the resources of navigation. But the obstacle is more apparent than real. A partially completed tunnel under the Hudson River has already indicated the way by which one of the obstructions may be overcome, and, on account of the want of space in New York, at the point where the obstacle is very much the most difficult of removal. When we look over other portions of the harbor we find the application of the same principle much more practicable. Across Staten Island Sound, at Elizabeth, the channel is only six hundred and fifty feet broad ; and

the same water-way at Perth Amboy has a breadth of but sixteen hundred feet. Bridges at these points, which it is the plain duty of Congress to authorize without delay, will open the entire available water front on Staten Island to the service of commerce, and, along the northern and northeastern shore of the island, avert the necessity for lighters in transportation between ships, warehouses, and railway trains. This improvement alone, within a few years, would bring incalculable relief to the commerce of the port, and cheapen terminal charges by a very large percentage. But this would be only the first link in the chain. A tunnel under the Narrows, costing very little more than the perishable harbor flotilla of the Erie and Pennsylvania railroads, a flotilla which, in the mutability of maritime affairs, was built for a duration of but ten years, would open up the entire water front of Long Island, already provided, in Brooklyn, with nearly five miles of water-front warehouses. Does it not seem a little strange that such a tunnel has not already been constructed? It is two or three miles nearer from Atlantic Avenue, in Brooklyn, following the tracks of the Staten Island Railway and the old Camden and Amboy Railroad, to Philadelphia, than from the Pennsylvania depot in Jersey City. But the Pennsylvania Railroad pays, annually, the interest, at four per cent., on more than \$4,000,000 for maintaining its water service to Brooklyn. This expenditure, even if met by a countervailing charge in

freight rates elsewhere, must be still regarded as a loss to the company, and it is a waste of the resources of commerce for which there can be no compensation. Ordinarily, no road is more prompt than the Pennsylvania road at discovering opportunities for enlarging its traffic. In its accommodations for both passenger and freight service it has been justly regarded, too, as a model road, unsurpassed, if not unrivalled, in the Union. The eyes of its managers, however, seem to have been turned more to the westward than to the eastward. Their terminal space in Jersey City, a city that has suffered incalculable injury through its conversion into a general freight yard for the railways, has been so far exhausted that the prompt handling of freight, at certain seasons of the year, is impossible; and were the company even able to secure cheaply the right of way for their four contemplated tracks through Elizabeth and Newark, they would only serve to increase the constriction at their single terminal point near the river. But the Camden and Amboy Railroad is their own property, and, connected with the Staten Island Railway, at Perth Amboy, it offers a free way to the most accessible water front on New York harbor, comprising the entire north shore of Staten Island, and the adjacent shores of Long Island in New Utrecht and Brooklyn. This section of the harbor, indeed, is the most natural and inexpensive terminal point to be found for not merely the Pennsylvania road, but for the Delaware,

Lackawanna, and Western road, the Philadelphia and Reading road, and the Lehigh Valley road. It is ready to welcome the Baltimore and Ohio road, also, when that great railway succeeds, finally, in laying its head on the harbor of New York.

### *Attacking a Boa-Constrictor.*

To come back from our excursion through the lower sections of the harbor, it will be worth while to land again upon the piers of New York, and indulge in a little further speculation on the unhappy scenes which we are compelled to witness on the streets. The city has vast capital and a good start, obtained, largely, when the transportation agencies of the country were essentially different from the existing system, and she can afford to waste a great deal of capital before meeting any irretrievable disaster. But she cannot afford to waste the interest on a capital of six or seven hundred millions, more or less, and hope to maintain her leading position on the harbor. At best she is placed at considerable disadvantages as against her local rivals, if the word rivalry can be used in designating commercial movements in a common centre. Owing to her situation on the east bank of the Hudson River, and her limited area, it will never be possible for New York, except at enormous cost, to dispense so completely as Brooklyn, Staten Island, and New Jersey with the water service in terminal transportation. But she can dispense with the unnecessary ex-

cess of her street transportation. The wholesale warehouses can be located along the water front in such close connection with the piers that merchandise can be stored without the assistance of truckmen. Our water-front streets are not ornamental. This is a fact that will bear repeating. Lined with gin mills, junk shops, cigar stores, cheap hash houses, etc., and offering about the most wretched specimens of architectural display to be found in the city, they present nothing along their entire extent that contributes to the æsthetic charms of the metropolis. They fail in furnishing us with even satisfactory glimpses of the river. In the matter of utility they represent only an enormous waste of space—a space sufficient for the storage of half the merchandise now held in hand in this vast commercial emporium. There can be no reserve in expressing an opinion on this subject. Those streets should be utilized to the last available inch in furnishing sites for warehouses, and, when this necessity is admitted, it will be very easy to devise a plan that will relieve the streets of every ton of merchandise, not needed for local consumption, that reaches the city. The late rapid-transit-railway syndicate recently cast its covetous eyes upon West Street, and pre-empted that so-called thoroughfare for one of the exterior rods in its proposed gridiron. For reasons which should be readily seen the construction of such a road would prove to the last degree disastrous for New York. It would render hopeless the

junction of the wharves and warehouses on the west side of the city. Such a catastrophe would finish the career of New York as the commercial emporium of the continent. Against the advantages possessed by the unimproved sections of New York Bay it is possible that this city, with its limited space, will be compelled, eventually, to yield the sceptre to its more favorably located neighbors on Long Island and Staten Island ; but it may be safely assumed that if the truck system of handling merchandise along the Hudson River water front is perpetuated the child that will live to see Brooklyn and Staten Island the commercial emporium of this neighborhood is already at school, and better up in the study of geography than some of our civil engineers. According to the testimony of the officers of the Custom-house the import trade has been steadily drifting away from New York during the past ten or twelve years and crossing to the Brooklyn warehouses. Under existing conditions, even without railway connection between Brooklyn and the mainland, the movement is likely to increase like the progress of a stone rolled down the side of a mountain. It will gather momentum as it goes, for, in New York, we are no longer able to handle any thing but the lighter kinds of merchandise.

#### *The Argument in Self-Protection.*

During the year 1851 the total imports into the United States were \$216,224,932, and of this amount

\$131,361,578 were entered in the port of New York. For the year 1881 the imports for the entire country rose to \$753,250,125, the credit to New York being \$495,425,906. In the table of exports a comparison between the commercial metropolis and the entire country is not quite so favorable; but since we about maintain our relative position, the figures, at first thought, will not be regarded as discouraging. For the year 1851 the exports from all the ports of the Union amounted to \$218,388,011; and from New York, \$87,653,849. In 1881 they had risen to \$921,784,193 for the whole country, and \$385,760,201 for New York. This, apparently, is not a bad showing; but there is something more to be considered than the mere tables of exports and imports. We must remember that during the last thirty years in the United States all roads have been tending to New York. Possessing the best natural harbor on the Atlantic seaboard, and located at the end of the prolonged system of natural and artificial water-ways that connect the East with the West, we have offered extraordinary inducements to commercial enterprise. As a consequence of this advantage, all the railroads have been drawn in this direction, until, with the exception of the Baltimore and Ohio, every trunk-line road, and several local roads of much importance have found a main terminal point upon our harbor. The Pennsylvania road, the Erie road, the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western road, and the Philadelphia and Reading road

have all come to New York within a period of thirty or a little more than thirty years. But during the same interval of time what has been the situation in competing cities? Boston, until very recently, was almost excluded from the interior, or compelled to communicate only over a road that diverted all the traffic possible to New York. Philadelphia has been possessed of but one trunk-line railroad to the West; Baltimore was no richer in avenues of transportation than Philadelphia; and New Orleans has passed through a series of civil convulsions that almost destroyed her commerce, both domestic and foreign. Looking at the subject from this point of view, and considering the advantages which we have derived from the Erie Canal, should it not be regarded as a rather startling discovery when we find that we have only held our own? Our advantages in point of location, means of communication with the interior and along the seaboard, and in the excellence and extent of our harbor should have enabled us to make a very signal gain during the last three decades over all our competitors combined. But we have done nothing of the sort. It is a matter of statistical demonstration that we have gained nothing on either Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or New Orleans. With our large capital and almost illimitable resources we have only maintained our relative position in controlling the foreign commerce of the country, while in the domestic trade we do not know where we stand. Our position in

the market for home products is doubtful. It is quite certain that the commercial travellers of New York, in drumming for customers in the West and South find themselves confronted and often placed *hors de combat* by competitors from cities which, thirty years ago, would not have dreamed of rivalry with the commercial metropolis. It is possible that this change is in part due to the industrial development of the country, a development that renders the concentration of commerce more difficult ; but it is more likely to result from the fact that merchandise passing through the warehouses of New York is subject to charges which render competition in distant cities a very precarious undertaking. They are shrewd merchants in this city who, whenever it is found convenient, order their goods forwarded directly from the factories where they are produced to the point of final delivery. Could we only draw their packages within the maelstrom known as New York harbor we should know how to break them up, and distribute them among the army of truckmen and the countless watch of sea-dogs that devour our substance both afloat and ashore.

Let us clearly understand this question. It is not upon foreign commerce that New York must depend for her commercial lead. Rapidly as this trade has been increasing during the past thirty years, it has not begun to keep pace with the advance caused by the development of our domestic industries. The power of foreign countries to absorb the rapidly growing sur-

plus of our products, too, is even a question for doubt. In the home markets must be found our main dependence, unless, at some future time, we are willing to confess the rivalry of Chicago. The success of our merchants will depend upon making New York a distributing point for the products of our factories and farms. If we wish to thrive, the city must be maintained as a huge magazine of supplies, where customers can be furnished with every description of merchandise on as favorable terms as it can be procured at the place of production. But it will be impossible to reach this pre-eminence, no matter what the magnitude of our operations, if we suffer every article of merchandise that comes into our possession to be loaded with a weight of terminal charges sufficient to destroy all margin of profit if offered at a reasonable price.

The city of New York, it must be remembered, is the creature of commerce; but there seems to be grave danger that we will forget our creator, and run after strange gods. We have displayed during the last few years an extraordinary industrial development, and point with a feeling of exultation to statistics which seem to place us in the lead as a manufacturing community. But our industries are not varied like those of Philadelphia, and in all parts of the city, south of the Harlem River at least, property is too high, and conveniences too limited to permit a very profitable expansion of our manufacturing industries. The city of

New York is essentially a commercial city, and the principal study of our citizens should be turned to the perfection of plans for facilitating and rendering inexpensive the operations of commerce. But this is the last thought that seems to enter into the popular conception of what is sensible and wise. We go distracted in the pursuit of rapid transit. But with one additional line of railway on the west side above Fifty-ninth Street, and possibly an extension of the Second Avenue Railway into the Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth wards, we will have rapid transit enough within the city to meet all reasonable demands during many years to come. The roads already built give all the rapid-transit accommodations which their managers can find it profitable to furnish, and beyond this supply all additional effort would represent only a waste of capital. We go wild, also, in projecting new parks. Well, this is a healthful sort of craze, and I am not disposed to censure its indulgence; but we greatly overrate the importance of parks for this city. We have seen displayed before an admiring public tables which tell us of the vast space covered by the pleasure-grounds of London, Paris, and Berlin. But the great capitals of Europe are all inland cities, while New York, a city by the sea, and surrounded by a vast expanse of water, can have little use for more than a limited number of great parks. It is to the docks and to channels of communication over and under the waters of our harbor that public attention should now be called; and in

this study will be found our most profitable field of employment.

*Conclusions Which do not Conclude.*

The city of New York holds property along the water front sufficient to pay its municipal debt and still retain a surplus large enough to secure all the park area needed by a population swelled to twice the total contained in our twenty-four wards. This may sound like an unfortunate assertion after the declaration that the grant of the right of eminent domain was an unfortunate incident in the early history of the city, and the statement will need a qualification. The best estates may be rendered worthless by bad administration. This water-front property would pay the municipal debt if it were well handled. It would be worth much more than \$92,000,000 if divided into sections and sold, in fee, to syndicates pledged to make improvements in accordance with plans furnished by the city. This would secure something like a homogeneous system, and protect the public against any monopoly of water-front franchises,—a security which it certainly does not possess under the existing system. The objections to this plan, however, would probably spring from the prevailing popular spirit of resistance to corporate organization,—a spirit which displays many of the symptoms of a very pronounced craze, but which might be strong enough to throw obstacles in the way of any comprehensive alienation of public property.

But this is not the only alternative. The city could secure possession of all private property to be affected by any proposed plan of improvement, and become its own *entrepreneur* in carrying forward the work. But this course would demand such an illimitable issue of new bonds, and the handling of such mints of money in the process of reconstruction, that the alternate popular dread of the politician and the political jobber might prove stronger than the fear of corporations. We stand, therefore, between the devil and the deep sea in projecting any comprehensive plan of improvement, and are somewhat in the condition of the inheritor of a vast fortune so encumbered by the conditions of the will that it is next to worthless. In this predicament it is easy to understand why our great inheritance may represent a positive misfortune rather than a blessing.

But there remains the still further alternative of selling the piers in detail, and offering to the individuals who come into possession the privilege of building warehouses over the river streets. This might prove an interminably slow process in securing improvement, and bring sluggish returns; but it would be a step in the right direction, the first step taken since the city was founded.

With regard to the measures necessary for drawing our empire of three islands into closer relations with the mainland, and bringing every section of the waterfront into direct connection with the railways, there are

really no obstacles of a serious character in the way. The work should be undertaken by the railroads in the interest of their own service ; but if their management is indifferent the labor may be assumed by the men whose property would be benefited by the work. At any point north of the deep cut of the Pennsylvania Railroad it costs a tunnel a mile long to get into Jersey City or Hoboken. Why, then, the difficulty in reaching Staten Island and Brooklyn, or even New York? When the magnitude of the interests involved are considered, the obstructions are very slight indeed ; and the conditions for reaching Staten Island will be made as soon as Congress shall have paved the way by granting a franchise for the bridges projected across Arthur Kill. A road to the more promising sections of Long Island will then be possible, and it will soon be opened.

Events that depend on the good judgment of municipal New York are not so easily foretold.



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